

Energy Department Fines BNFL Inc. for Violating Nuclear Safety Requirements

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For Immediate Release
Release Date: March 22, 2001

WASHINGTON, DC The Department of Energy, through its Office of Price-Anderson Enforcement, has issued a \$41,250 civil penalty to BNFL Inc., a contractor firm conducting decontamination and decommissioning activities at the department's East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The penalty is associated with a metal fire that occurred in the ETTP K-33 Building on April 4, 2000 during decontamination and decommissioning activities. The fire was contained in a bundle of metal tubes housed in the assembly being decontaminated. The investigation found that BNFL failed to follow established procedures and implement an effective quality improvement process to identify and correct problems. As a result, safety and worker hazards were not fully identified or analyzed. Although there were no worker exposures or release of uranium into the external environment, the fire caused the release of uranium from the metal tubes into the building while the workers were fighting the fire. Additionally, the fire department did not receive the information it needed when fighting the fire regarding potential hazards.

The K-33 Building at the former Gaseous Diffusion Plant was placed into operation in 1954 to produce highly enriched uranium. The building was permanently shutdown in 1987 and decontamination and decommissioning activities began in 1998.

BNFL Inc. has proposed and implemented corrective actions, including an improved work plan that addresses potential safety hazards and development of a detailed fire protection plan, to help ensure that an incident of this nature will not reoccur.

The Preliminary Notice of Violation (PNOV) was issued on March 19 and becomes final within 30 days unless challenged by BNFL Inc. The firm is required to respond to the Preliminary Notice with a schedule for completing all corrective actions. The Energy Department will review BNFL Inc.'s response to the PNOV and determine whether further enforcement action is necessary.

The Price-Anderson Amendments Act of 1988 requires the Energy Department to undertake regulatory enforcement actions against contractors for violations of its nuclear safety requirements. The program is implemented by the Office of Enforcement and Investigations. This action was taken with the support and participation of the department's Oak Ridge Operations Office, which will ensure that

the corrective actions are fully implemented.

Additional details can be found on the Internet at <http://www.eh.doe.gov/enforce>.

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Release No. R-01-XXX